

## **CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM**

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) offered Missouri meaningful opportunities to expand the former Independent Living Program initiative. Formerly, eligibility had been restricted to young people in foster care ages 16-21. Eligible young people, under CFCIP, are those who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 and those who have aged out of foster care at age 18 or after, but have not reached age 21.

The Children's Division will offer a continuum of independent living services for youth ages 14-21 in foster care regardless of their permanency goal. Fourteen full-time and one part-time Independent Living Program (ILP) Specialists provide services to designated counties in their area. Independent Living services vary in each area of the state in order to meet the individual needs of its population.

### **Foster Care Youth Ages 14 – 15**

The Children's Division offers youth ages 14 – 15 an opportunity to participate in a Pre-ILP program. The Pre-ILP program is designed to complement the ILP Life Skills Group that is offered to youth 16 years and older. The Pre-ILP program is the beginning of a continuum of independent living services offered to youth in Missouri. It teaches youth 14 -15 "soft" and "hard" skills, such as anger management and budgeting. The Pre-ILP curriculum has been offered in a certain areas of the state during SFY05 with the plans to make modifications before the next session of group is started in SFY06.

### **Foster Care Youth Ages 16 – 21**

A basic curriculum is used statewide for life skills training to youth ages 16-21. The ILP Specialists are given the latitude to modify and add to the curriculum as long as the required subject matters are addressed. The life skills curriculum includes skill building and information on the following topics: communication skills, self-esteem, community resources, transportation, housing, educational/vocational planning, employment skills, money management, home management, health, and legal issues.

In addition to the life skills curriculum, the ILP Specialists provide other various independent living formal or informal services to the youth. Formal services may include, but are not limited to direct application or utilization of any of the modules in the curriculum, peer counseling, leadership training, newsletters, group activities, camps, independent living related seminars and conferences, and other support and guidance as needed. Informal (indirect/adjunct) services may include information and referral, support groups for life skills group graduates, tutoring, funding for driver's education or assistance with educational related needs.

### **Transitioning Services for Aftercare Youth**

Missouri has for many years used state only funds to provide services and support to youth ages 18–21 that remain in the agency's care and custody. The Children's Division has expanded the independent living program to meet Chafee requirements to serve former foster (Aftercare) youth. Current eligibility requires the youth to remain in foster care until age 17.5 to receive Aftercare services. Chafee services will be used to empower youth who are experiencing out-of-home placement, transitioning out of or have exited foster care to develop the potential to become self-sufficient and to successfully transition into adult living. Each young adult will be individually assessed and participate in the development of their plan for self-sufficiency. The goal is to complement the young adult's own efforts and to assure that they recognize and accept their personal responsibility in the preparation for reaching independence.

Six categories of critical service needs will be available for young adults transitioning out of or who have exited foster care.

- Emergency/Crisis Intervention Funds
- Housing
- Room and Board
- Support Services
- Educational/Post-Secondary Assistance
- Job Training/Employment Assistance

These young adults are also eligible to receive life skills training and other array of services offered to youth ages 16-21 in foster care, with the exception of Medicaid/MC+. Missouri has opted out of the Medicaid Option. Medical services, except for information and referral, will not be available for this population to access at this time.

The multitude of services available under Chafee for youth transitioning out of or have exited foster care are meant to be flexible and short term, to be used as a safety net to stabilize the youth and allow them to continue their efforts to be self-sufficient. During FFY-03, 561 youth ages 18-21 exited foster care. One hundred and forty-four youth were served with at least one Chafee Aftercare service. We recognize and respect the wishes of our young adults who are eligible for these services, but do not wish to participate. Missouri served approximately 25 percent of the eligible youth for Aftercare services. Funds were expended for a variety of reasons including rent, utilities, rent and utility deposit, food, clothing, education and training assistance and other services as needed as a support for the youth, not as on-going supplemental funding sources.

The Children's Division will assure that no more than 30% of Missouri's allotment of Chafee funds will be expended for room and board for youth who left foster care at age 18 or older, but have not reached age 21.

To increase by 10% the number of foster and former foster youth participating in the Independent Living program, become or are employed, obtain a high school diploma or GED, attended college, vocational/technical schools, and living independently of agency maintenance programs.

**ILP Table**

<b>FFY</b>	<b>2004</b>
Total # of Youth in Foster Care Between Ages 16-21	3733
Number of Foster Youth served Between Ages 16-21	2075
Percent of Foster Youth Served Between Ages 16-21	55.6%
Are Employed	491
Youth Enrolled in Life Skills Training Who Have Obtained a High School Diploma, GED and Currently enrolled in High School	1858
Attend college, vocational/technical school	109

<b>FFY</b>	<b>2004</b>
Total # of Former Foster Youth Served	179
Are Employed	80
Have Obtained a High School Diploma or GED	80
Attend college, vocational/technical school	22
Number of Youth Who Have Obtained Housing/Other Community Services	58
Number of Youth Who Are Living Independently of Agency Maintenance Programs	57